

**Oral History
Capturing Quarantine
Spring 2020
Final Reflection**

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Section I:

1. Thinking back to the start of the semester, what were your initial thoughts about participating in an oral history project documenting your experience during the ongoing global pandemic?

Thinking back to the beginning of the semester, my initial thoughts for participating in an oral history project documenting my experience during the ongoing pandemic was that I was overall excited for the project. At the beginning of the semester I was still very much in a paranoid mindstate about catching the virus because I had just come back to Chicago from my hometown where I was pressured into thinking that way. Even though I recognized part of the time that my thinking at the time was irrational I still recognized that my thought processes during the time of coronavirus had been different than any other time I'd been alive. As a result, hearing the oral history project I'd be participating in, I felt very excited that I got a chance to speak about my experience through the pandemic while I was still going through it. Up to this point I never had the opportunity to really talk about my experiences from spring and summer 2020 except to my friends who already had preconceived notions about everything I was saying because most of them had known me for a while before the pandemic. So, getting to talk to someone new on a platform that others would one day see made me look forward to taking this class more after the first day.

2. How did your feelings about the project change?

My feelings for this project changed because as time went on I realized that this project wasn't just about documenting one's experiences with coronavirus but one's life experiences as well and how those influenced how those affected the way they adjusted to living in a pandemic. While I realized early into taking this class that all my peers had been affected by the virus too I didn't realize at first how every person was affected in a different way. For example, when doing my interview with Caity I figured that transitioning to online school would've been something that was very difficult for her since I knew she was very active in on campus jobs at Columbia. However, while doing the interview, I learned that she did her junior and senior year of high school online so she had already been through the process of doing school online before. So, after learning about that it made me realize that while most people are struggling through the same things right now everyone's past experiences have prepared them differently for an event like this. So, feelings shifted to the fact that we're not just capturing what happened to

our narrators in quarantine but how their past experience influenced how they would experience the pandemic.

Section II:

3. As an interviewer:

a. How did you prepare for the interview?

I prepared for the interview by first doing several different drafts of my script, thinking about where I would conduct my interview and how I would light the space it would be conducted in, and I spoke with Caity several times before the interview to get a feel for the kind of person she was. In total I completed about six drafts of my script before conducting the interview. As I redid my script several times I got a feel for what picture questions I should ask my narrator and how much time I wanted to spend on each section of the script in the interview. The second part, figuring out where I should conduct my interview, was a lot of fun for me because as a film major I love thinking about how to dress and light scenes of mine. So, after the instructor recommended I draw the blinds in my room if I were to conduct it there, I decided to draw the blinds in my room so there was no chance of me getting distracted by outside events during the interview. Then I made sure to clean up as much of my area as much as possible to avoid myself getting distracted by junk around my room. Lastly, I turned on most lights in my room so the image could be the most properly exposed. Lastly, after talking with Caity a couple times before the interview I got a feel of major subject matters and events in her life that may come up during the interview so I could have questions regarding those events already ready. These are the different things I did to prepare for my interview.

b. What was it like to interview a classmate?

I found it really educating experience interviewing another classmate. I think many of us have first impressions of who someone is based on the first interactions they have with them and we stick with this assumption of the type of person they are for future interactions. However, this interview forced us to get to know a classmate on a more personal level. By doing this it reminded me that people have so much more to them than just what one sees in the first couple of times interacting with them. After interviewing another classmate of mine it just reminds me how much there is to know about a person before one can say that they really know them.

c. How did you feel after the interview?

I felt very educated after the interview. After interviewing my narrator I felt like I knew so much more about who they are. After learning all the information about them in the interview I felt like I actually

wanted to keep asking them questions. After the interview Caity and I talked for another thirty minutes about life experiences and what she said in the interview in a more casual way. So overall, I thought I felt educated and informed about who my narrator really was and I didn't know who they were up until this interview.

d. What is the most important thing you learned as an interviewer?

The most important thing I learned about as an interviewer was to stick to asking the interviewee questions about what she had just said instead of sticking completely to your script. In the practice interview I saw that Caity brought up several interesting directions to take the conversation. However, since I wasn't as experienced of an interviewer at the time, I wasn't sure how to go down one of those directions. As a result I just stuck with asking her questions from my script. However, realizing I did this wrong, in the actual interview I did my best to ask questions based on what my interviewee had just said in order to take the interview in unexpected directions.

e. What advice would you give to future interviewers?

A piece of advice I'd give future interviewers is to give the narrator time to speak. While I'm a patient speaker in conversations, I find that in interviews the interviewer will think the narrator is finished speaking when they're really just thinking of what they're going to say next and ask their next question too soon therefore cutting the narrator off from what they were thinking about. So, when interviewing, give the narrator enough time to answer your question and they'll usually give you some sort of indication in their body language that they're finished speaking.

4. As a **narrator**:

a. How did you prepare to be interviewed?

As a narrator, I did the practice interview with my interviewer Ben and repeated the same steps for designing the lighting in my room. As a narrator I honestly didn't want to prepare as much because I didn't want to pre plan my answers when I didn't know what my interviewer would ask me in the first place. So, when doing the practice interview I answered the questions of my interviewer the best I could and let them guide me through the interview. After doing the same lighting setup for the interview when I was the interviewer, I just trusted my instincts and answered the questions the best that I could and if I didn't feel comfortable with a question I'd let my interviewer know. This is how I prepared for being interviewed.

b. Describe your experience being interviewed.

My experience being interviewed was very therapeutic for me. I feel like for most of summer 2020 I kept feelings of isolation and unhappiness bottled up inside of me. Like I mentioned before, while I was able to tell other friends of mine about my concerns, I feel like some of them didn't take what I was saying seriously because of what they knew about me before quarantine. So, I almost enjoyed talking to a complete stranger about my concerns even more than someone I'd known before because I felt like I didn't have to hide anything from them since they barely knew who I was before quarantine.

c. How did you feel after the interview ended?

After the interview ended I felt reassured. I felt like I was happy with the responses I had given and I was de stressed after talking about concerns about mine. I'm a person who feels like therapy is a great way to work through one's feelings. So, being able to talk about concerns and experiences of mine to someone who has a neutral voice towards my experiences was almost like seeing a therapist. This is why after my interview I felt very reassured and relaxed.

d. What would you tell someone who is hesitant to be interviewed?

I would tell someone who is hesitant to be interviewed that they don't have to answer questions they don't feel comfortable with talking about. While the interviewer's goal is to ask one about their life experiences they also wish to make an interviewee as comfortable as possible. So, going into an interview, know that one doesn't have to answer questions they aren't comfortable with.

Section III:

5. What information is missing? What else do you think those trying to understand the pandemic should know?

I feel like a piece of information that is missing is more of the psychological effects of being in quarantine and what that could do to one's mental state. While there were questions on depression and anxiety about the virus, I think that the conversation is much deeper than just those two questions for a lot of people. Most people have not had to deal with prolonged isolation in their lifetime so understanding how isolation truly affected their mental state should be addressed.